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Aruba: One Caring Island



Taliban break US contacts, Karzai orders US out of villages

KABUL (AFP) - The Taliban broke off contacts over peace talks with Washington on Thursday and the Afghan president demanded US troops leave village outposts, just days after an American soldier massacred 16 villagers.

Hamid Karzai also called for a transition of the nation's security from NATO control to the Afghan government in 2013 rather than the previous deadline of 2014, after meeting visiting US Defence Secretary Leon Panetta.

That plan had been floated by Panetta ahead of a NATO meeting in Brussels last month, but the US-led coalition insists that it will only withdraw its combat troops by the end of 2014.

The announcements from the Islamist militia fighting US troops for 10 years and by Karzai, Washington's key ally in Kabul, came hard on the heels of the shooting spree by a US soldier, who has been detained and flown out of the country.

The fallout overshadowed Panetta's two-day visit to Afghanistan, which was

planned ahead of the shooting and was aimed at calming relations already hurt by last month's burning of Korans at a US base.

The Taliban made no mention of the killings as it announced the suspension of contacts with US officials in Qatar over a prisoner swap -- talks that had built up hopes of a political solution before US troops leave.

"It was due to their alternating and ever-changing position that the Islamic Emirate was compelled to suspend all dialogue with the Americans," the Taliban said on their website.

US officials declined to comment on why the Taliban had suspended contacts.

The rapid developments came after what US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton called "a difficult and complex few weeks in Afghanistan".

"We're ready to take over all security responsibilities now," Karzai's spokesman Aimal Faizi quoted the president as telling Panetta. "We'd prefer that the process be completed in 2013, not 2014."

David and Karen Rodgers were enjoying their annual three weeks of escaping winter cold in Massachusetts when a mishap could have ruined their entire vacation, but instead re-affirmed their admiration of Aruba and its people.

Renaissance Beach Suites in Oranjestad is their home away from home every March, and they were looking forward to a quiet dinner with some take out from the nearby restaurant, Que Pasa? Unfortunately, after picking up their food, David tripped just a few feet away from the entrance on a tire shredder in the exit of parking lot next door. He took a hard fall, and the food went flying.

Three onlookers came immediately to his aid, picking him up and dusting him off, but David's favorite dish, the tomato soup, was beyond rescue, so he went back into the restaurant to order another.

When Que Pasa? owner Martin saw his disheveled appearance and heard the story, he wouldn't hear of Martin paying for a replacement soup, and in fact, insisted on replacing the entire meal, gratis.

"Actually, I only really needed another soup, I didn't

Sophie poses with David
 expect this at all, and was ready to pay, but they wouldn't accept my money."

Everyone in the restaurant felt badly for David, as it was evident he had been seriously hurt by the fall (not only scrapes and bruises, but he fractured his wrist.)

Sophie, a member of the help staff, who is an art student by day, was so concerned, she insisted on carrying the food and walking David safely back to his resort, which was quite a surprise for Karen when he walked back into the room with a very lovely young lady in tow.

After a trip to the Dr. Horacio E. Oduer emergency

room, where David again affirms he received the most "courteous and considerate care" and a cast, he and Karen were finally able to settle in and enjoy their very much anticipated dinner.

"Nobody wants to get injured anytime, particularly while on vacation, but really, the extreme kindness of everyone we came in contact with, especially Sophie and the folks at Que Pasa?, made it a positive experience for us," commented David.

"We just had to tell this story. We know Aruba is called "One Happy Island," but we think it should be called "One Caring Island" too!"

By Rosalie Klein



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Government to measure land areas for future construction



In last week's Parliament meeting, one of the questions raised was regarding the Law pertaining to our environment. Parliamentarians inquired as to how far along the preparation of this law was and exactly what does it contain.

The Minister of Infrastructure, Integration and the Environment, Benny Sievinger, explained to Parliament that meetings were held with the different NGO groups on the island to discuss the propositions to be included in the law on the environment.

The commission charged with designing a law concept meets every Tuesday, and that the information received from this commission is that the concept should be ready to be sent to Parliament by

the month of June. This law will bring about a great deal of changes for many institutions on the island. For example, DOW will have to change the law "Bouw en Woning Verordening." The change in the DOW law has to do with the new requirements for building homes. Every building project will have to take the environment into consideration. The construction process will require a "milieu vergunning" and a "hindervergunning." These requirements are necessary in order to better structure the environment on Aruba, according to the government. To the government, the environment is not limited to trash, but it entails everything in our environment. According to the Minister, every-

thing must be brought into balance, all development.

The government has announced that they have a great deal of land that can be deeded for building homes, but they want to be sure to take the environment into account. There are currently about 1500 lots which have been parceled out and ready to be measured.

In this new situation, the government has decided that contrary to previous practice, they will not go in and clean off land to later mark off the area. They will clean off an area of land only where roads are to be constructed. They will take pictures of the area of land - ascertain what trees are on the land, bird nests, boulders, etc. and how these can be conserved within the development planned for the land area. They will also determine which land can be designated for construction and which must be conserved as part of nature. In principle, they will attempt to conserve all trees and build around them.

The process for getting a piece of land will entail getting a specific report made of the total land area and its 'contents.' This may create some delay in the process of acquiring land, but the government is convinced that this is necessary in order to protect and conserve our environment.

The Minister informed that they are in the process of setting up a new department called - "Natuur & Milieu," which has already been approved by the Council of Ministers. The project has been sent for further advice, and expects to reach the Council of Ministers this week for final ratification. Once approved, this department, "Directie Natuur & Milieu" will resort under the Minister of the Environment.

Department of Labor announcement on Official Holidays

With respect to the many questions related to the status of the upcoming holidays, the Department of Labor has decided to issue the following announcement:

For all businesses and shops operating under the Labor Ordinance Ab 1990/GT 57, Sundays and Holidays are considered free days (free from labor) for all employees. This year the National Anthem and Flag Day (a Holiday) falls on a Sunday, which automatically is a free day for employees. This does not mean, however, that Monday the 19th is a free day for these employees.

The official Decree of holidays on Aruba stipulates that only March 18th is a holiday, regardless of the day in the week it falls. In essence, according to the saying in the community, the employees

who fall under the Labor Ordinance (AB 1989/GT 74, article 1 paragraph 1).

This day, March 18, should not be confused with May 1st (Labor Day). The Labor Ordinance (AB 1989/GT 74, article 1 paragraph 2) specifically indicates that for May 1st there is a difference in application. Only for Labor Day (May 1st) should this fall on a Sunday, will the following day (May 2nd) be considered the free day for all laborers. This rule does not apply to any other holiday which may fall on a Sunday.

Hence, the Department of Labor makes it known that Monday, March 19th is NOT a holiday...it is a normal working day for the public sector on Aruba! It will be business and work as usual on Monday, March 19th!

Dutch PM refuses Europe call to disavow far-right website

THE HAGUE (AFP) - Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte refused Thursday to condemn a website described as "deplorable" by the European Parliament, the work of a far-right party that partners with his government.

Stressing the site was a party initiative and did not reflect any official views, Rutte said his government does not "comment on the measures of political parties".

The European Parliament earlier called on Rutte to condemn and distance himself from the "deplorable" Party for Freedom (PVV) website, which invites citizens to complain about immigrants of east European origin.

"The government has always insisted that the site is the initiative of a political

party, the PVV" of extreme right politician Geert Wilders, Rutte wrote in a letter to the Dutch lower house of parliament.

"The site does not reflect the views or the policies of the government with regards to job migration from eastern and central Europe," the document added.

The European Parliament adopted a resolution describing the site as an affront to the fundamental values of human dignity, freedom, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights.

The text "urges the Dutch government not to turn a blind eye to the policies" of the PVV, which it said "are in contradiction with fundamental EU values."



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Dutch Minister of Integration to visit Aruba as Consultant

In the month of May the government of Aruba hopes to be ready with their integration plan, to be able to discuss this at that time, according to Aruba's Minister of Integration.

Several years ago, the previous government administration had implemented the Swiss Model, which entails that residence/work permits are issued for the duration of no more than 3 years. This time span prevents the employee from investing in Aruba. With respect to the Swiss Model for work and residence permits, the current government decided that they would not continue with that Model. That being the case, they conducted an investigation on the matter of integration.

The result of said investigation proved that the 3-year permits were not practical nor beneficial for Aruba. Employees were unable to invest in Aruba, and business owners likewise were not likely to invest in employees who would be leaving their employ within 3 years. Particularly for live-in and other household domestic servants this was a serious problem. For these reasons the discussion about integration was raised.

Regarding this issue, the government contracted an official from IND, conducted several discussions on the topic with different consulates on the island, with athletic clubs and other institutions, in order to

formulate a good integration program. The work on the reform of the integration program is far advanced and actually ready to be submitted to the Council of Ministers on May 1st for their discussion. After which it will be sent to Parliament for their ratification and approval.

The protocol that the government wishes to create with respect to integration has been discussed with Holland on various occasions and will be the topic of discussion in the upcoming days. In this context, the Dutch Minister of Integration, Mr. Leers will be in Aruba for further deliberation on the topic of integration within the Kingdom and on Aruba

Would Santorum nod hand Obama a second term?

CHICAGO (AFP) - Republicans could end up handing President Barack Obama a second term if they tap conservative darling Rick Santorum to be the party's White House contender, analysts say.

"Party donors and insiders dread a Santorum candidacy as likely to lead to (an) electoral vote Obama blow-out," conservative pundit David Frum wrote on the Daily Beast.

"The Santorum candidacy pushes Republicans toward an election in which the issues are religious, cultural and sexual, not economic."

Republicans swept to historic victories in the 2010 mid-term US elections by focusing on economic issues in the midst of a deep and

painful downturn.

But the lengthy primary process -- and the fight to win over the party's conservative base -- has revived the divisive culture war over issues such as abortion and gay marriage.

Santorum's firebrand rhetoric helped him chip away at rival Mitt Romney's frontrunner status with a series of come-from-behind primary victories, most recently in Alabama and Mississippi on Tuesday.

It could be a serious problem in a general election which hinges on winning over centrist and independent voters in key battleground states, said John Green, a political science professor at the University of Akron.



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Rising star takes charge of India's most populous state



NEW DELHI (AFP) - A 38-year-old engineering graduate was sworn in yesterday as the head of India's most populous state, having bested the heir to the country's leading political dynasty in a watershed election.

Akhilesh Yadav's meteoric rise to become the youngest ever chief minister of Uttar Pradesh has thrust him into the national spotlight, where supporters tout him as the poster boy for a new generation of reformist, tech-savvy politicians.

The prize of UP, which returns the largest number of MPs to the federal parliament, was sweetened by being won at the expense of another young, but far more famous politician, Rahul Gandhi.

Gandhi, 41, the son, grandson and great-grandson of Indian premiers, had a humiliating fourth place showing.

Yadav's Samajwadi Party exceeded expectations to win an absolute majority in the 403-seat state assembly -- a victory largely attributed to his campaign efforts.

Yadav's father, wrestler-turned-politician Mulayam Singh Yadav has served three terms as the state's chief minister and founded the Samajwadi Party, which he still leads, in 1992.

Few expected him to become a successful politician, particularly after he briefly broke ranks with his family to marry an upper-caste college graduate.

Yadav's preference for Indian clothing, his insistence on speaking Hindi in public and his deferential stance towards his father, whom he addresses as "Netaji" (respected leader), have all played well in conservative UP.

Behind the scenes, he is credited with modernising a moribund party known more for its noisy campaigns featuring Bollywood stars and its ties to alleged criminals than for its record on governance or development.

Yadav made an effort to woo young voters, promising jobs and a greater share in India's economic growth.

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US ex-governor heads to jail for corruption

CHICAGO (AFP) - Ousted Illinois governor Rod Blagojevich reported to prison Thursday to serve a 14-year sentence for trying to auction off President Barack Obama's vacated US Senate seat and a host of other corruption charges.

The Democratic governor was arrested in the midst of what prosecutors called "a

political corruption crime spree" just weeks after Obama's historic November 2008 election.

Blagojevich, 55, was convicted of 17 corruption counts in June after his first trial resulted in a hung jury on all but one of the charges.

The expletive-laden transcripts of Blagojevich's secretly

recorded conversations and his subsequent antics created fascinating political theater and the flamboyant politico refused to leave quietly.

He held a press conference outside his home Wednesday where supporters chanted "free our governor" as Blagojevich insisted "this is not over" and that everything he

did "was on the right side of the law."

"Saying goodbye is the hardest thing I've ever had to do," he told reporters as he left his Chicago home before the sun came up.

"I'm leaving with a heavy heart, a clear conscience, but I have high, high hopes for the future."

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TUESDAY AND FRIDAY: LIVE MUSIC

International News

Obama slams Republicans as new energy "naysayers"

LARGO (AFP) - US President Barack Obama Thursday mocked Republican foes who snub his alternative energy plans, comparing them to those who questioned the revolutionary rise of television and automobiles.

Obama, facing rising political heat over spiking gas prices as he fires up his bid for a second term ahead of November's election, hit back at those who accuse him of wasting taxpayer money on failed new generation energy projects.

In his most sarcastic and cutting campaign mode, Obama slammed his rivals as "naysayers" who were stuck in the past, doubling down on his energy policy despite claims from Republican candidates that it is a miserable failure.

Obama strongly defended his plans to make America a leader in new energy sources like biofuels, and wind power and solar power, and rebuked Republicans for opposing his plans to cut subsidies to profit cranking oil producers.

"If some of these folks were around when Columbus set sail ... they would not have believed that the world was round," he said, at a Community College in the Maryland suburbs outside Washington DC.

"There have always been folks who are the naysayers and don't believe in the future and don't believe in trying to

do things differently."

Obama warned supporters that they would likely soon hear Republican calls of "drill, drill, drill" as election season heats up, and but warned that solely relying on new oil exploration would not solve America's energy woes.

"America uses more than 20 percent of the world's oil. If we drilled every square inch of this country ... we would still have only two percent of the world's known oil reserves.

Republicans accused Obama of "lowballing" the true extent of America's oil reserves, citing research that indicates that proven extractable energy could prove to be much

higher.

Leading Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney told Fox News on Thursday that Obama was compounding America's energy problems but not opening up drilling in the Arctic, and by not approving the Keystone XL pipeline from Canada among other projects.

"The world believes that America's not going to have the energy we need, and we're going to have to continue sending hundreds of billions of dollars out of our economy going into other nations," Romney said.

"We need a president to open up these things."

US gives \$1 million to anti-drugs drive in Afghanistan

WASHINGTON (AFP) - The United States said Thursday it has contributed \$1 million to a United Nations program to help probe, arrest and prosecute drug traffickers working in Afghanistan and Central Asia.

The United States gave the funds Wednesday in Vienna to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime's (UNODC) Regional Program for Promoting Counternarcotics Efforts in Afghanistan and Neighboring Countries, according to the

State Department.

The funds are aimed at "promoting enhanced techniques for the investigation, arrest, and successful prosecution of significant drug traffickers operating in Afghanistan and Central Asia," the agency said in a statement.

The contribution is also designed to disrupt their trafficking networks.

The UNODC regional program, the State Department said, is "expected to complement" US efforts in the region to send more US Drug Enforcement Administration officers to Central Asia to work with their regional counterparts.

An annual State Department report said last week that the Afghan government has made progress in the last year in fighting drugs trafficking and cultivation, but added that the "gains remain fragile."

Afghanistan grows about 90 percent of the world's opium.

Taliban break

continued from page 1

-Karzai then told Panetta that US-led international forces should "be withdrawn from villages and relocated in their bases", his office said in a statement, without specifying a timeline.

It was not immediately clear how many American bases may be affected by Karzai's demand, as the United States previously disbanded a number of outposts in a bid to concentrate on securing major towns from Taliban influence.

US defence officials sought to play down Karzai's calls on the outposts and said Kabul had not requested any change in an agreed timetable for a gradual troop drawdown.

A US official accompanying Panetta, who arrived in Abu Dhabi after his visit to Afghanistan, told reporters Kabul had agreed with NATO on a schedule for security transition through 2014 and that had not changed.

Panetta's spokesman George Little said the Pentagon chief and Karzai had a "very positive" meeting and that the "issue of villages" came up but in accordance with previously agreed plans.

NATO meanwhile vowed to stick to its plan to finish handing Afghans control of security nationwide by the end of 2014.

Panetta earlier told reporters after his Karzai talks that he was "confident" both sides could work out a treaty allowing a US military presence in the country beyond 2014.

The defence chief said he was optimistic that both sides would reach an agreement on controversial night raids -- a major issue blocking the treaty -- ahead of a NATO

summit in Chicago in May.

Karzai objects to the raids on the grounds that they violate the sanctity of Afghan families in their own homes and that they are responsible for many civilian deaths -- a claim the US disputes.

The treaty being negotiated is expected to cover Afghan-US relations beyond 2014, with the US keen to maintain a foothold in a country neighbouring Iran and to help prevent it from once again becoming a haven for Al-Qaeda.

Analysts fear Sunday's shootings could complicate talks on a possible long-term US troop presence, as the government has so far refused to grant them legal immunity -- the same issue that scuppered a US strategic pact with Iraq.

Panetta said he promised Karzai that the gunman would be brought to justice and that the Pentagon would look at what circumstances may have caused the incident -- including the possible effect of combat stress.

But his visit was also overshadowed by an unprecedented security breach during his arrival in Afghanistan Wednesday when an Afghan interpreter tried to ram a truck into US Marines waiting to greet the Pentagon chief at Camp Bastion.

Panetta downplayed the attack, telling reporters: "I have absolutely no reason to believe that this was directed at me."

But the incident is likely to heighten concerns about a surge in attacks on Western troops carried out by the Afghan allies they are training to take over responsibility for security.

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International News

Pro-Assad show, 'massacre' mark Syria anniversary



DAMASCUS : Syrian soldiers dance with government supporters in front of a portrait of Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad during a pro-regime rally in Damascus. AFP PHOTO

DAMASCUS (AFP) - Huge rallies played up support for Syria's president on Thursday despite a new "massacre" report and a refugee exodus to Turkey as a deadly revolt against his autocratic rule entered a second year.

International peace envoy Kofi Annan, meanwhile, demanded answers from President Bashar al-Assad's regime before the UN Security Council re-enters the fray in a conflict which monitors now say has cost more than 9,100 lives.

State television showed tens of thousands of people waving Syrian flags and Assad's portrait in squares in Damascus, the northern city of Aleppo, Latakia on the

Mediterranean coast, Suweida to the south and Hasaka in the northeast.

The cities have been relatively unscathed by the deadly crackdown on dissent.

The authorities, which have blamed the bloodshed on foreign-backed "terrorist gangs," announced a "global march for Syria" to counter anti-regime demonstrations being organised this week by the opposition across the world.

Against a backdrop of a sea of flags, including the colours of Syria's Russian and Iranian allies as well as Lebanon's Shiite group Hezbollah, a bugler played in Damascus before a military band struck up the national anthem.

"We are not scared of death. We are ready to sacrifice ourselves for you, oh Syria," the demonstrators chanted, many of them singing and dancing, and shouting: "Long live the army!"

In a breakdown of 9,113 deaths in the past 12 months, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the toll comprised 6,645 civilians, 1,997 members of Assad's security forces and 471 rebels.

In Aleppo and on the outskirts of Damascus, security forces broke up scattered anti-regime protests, according to the Local Coordination Committees, which organise demonstrations on the ground.

Bashar, get out," women chanted at a rally in the Jubar district of eastern Damascus, in a video posted by activists on the Internet.

The Observatory, meanwhile, said 23 mutilated corpses were found near the protest city of Idlib in north-west Syria that was seized by regime forces this week.

The victims had been blindfolded and handcuffed before being shot dead and the bodies dumped outside Idlib, it said, in an apparent repeat of a "massacre" of dozens of women and children in the flashpoint city of Homs last weekend.

Human Rights Watch stepped in to demand an end to the "scorched earth methods" being deployed by Assad, and insist that China and Russia stop blocking UN efforts to take tough action.

Moscow and Beijing have since October blocked two Security Council draft resolutions to condemn Damascus on the grounds they were unbalanced and aimed at regime change.

After a mission to Damascus, UN-Arab League mediator Annan has urged Assad to speed up efforts to end the bloodletting in Syria.

Driver wanted to play DVD 'just before' Swiss crash: media



BRUSSELS (AFP) - The driver of a bus that crashed in Switzerland, killing 22 children, tried to play a DVD just before the accident, Belgian and Swiss papers said Thursday, an allegation rejected by his employer.

The website of Dutch-language Belgian daily Het Laatste Nieuws said that "just before the accident, the driver wanted to put a DVD" in the player.

The newspaper, without directly identifying the sources, said "this is what injured children told their parents and medics" in Swiss hospitals.

The daily reported from Switzerland that a teacher with the schoolchildren had taken a DVD to the driver shortly before Tuesday night's crash in an alpine tunnel, which also killed the two drivers and four other adults.

The paper said that a "moment of distraction" could have led to "the driver losing control."

A Swiss police official, Renato Kalbermatten, told the

newspaper this was speculation, saying there was no confirmation available via the tunnel's closed-circuit cameras.

Swiss daily Aargauer Zeitung reported the same claims.

The head of the Tootours bus company, Tom Cooremans, and the head of the Belgian Coach Operators Federation (FBAA) rejected the allegations during a press conference.

They said it would have been impossible for a child to see what was going on in the front of the bus because the driver's cabin is at a lower level than the passenger seats in the Altano model made by bus maker Van Hool.

Swiss officials said the body of the driver was expected to remain in the country after the other dead are repatriated to Belgium and the Netherlands.

Officials said "health analyses have to be carried out" to check if he was suffering from an illness that could have caused the accident.



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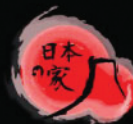
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Aruba Hospital making quantum leap with Stem Cel Transplant



Dr. Roel Jonkhoff, Oncologist who assisted at the Stem Cel Transplant.

Last week, the Dr. Horacio Oduber Hospital announced that they recently performed the very first stem cell transplant in Aruba. This is most certainly something to rejoice about, and a unique accomplishment for Aruba. Not only is this a quantum leap for Aruba, but especially significant in view of the increase of cancer cases on Aruba. This new treatment is of special significance for the Kahler (Multiple Myeloma) cancer cases.

Oncology Department of the Aruba Hospital together with professor G.J. Os-

senkoppele of the VU Medical Center in Amsterdam, developed the treatment method in 2001/2002. This particular method has already been implemented in other countries around the world.

The single treatment of the new procedure enables the patient to forfeit the current continuous treatment regimen lasting 3 to 6 years. Oncologist Roel Jonkhoff of the treatment protocol reports that the treatment requires that 1 liter of blood is taken from the bone marrow of the patient suffering from the disease. This is done with a

regular needle injection. The blood taken is then stored in the refrigerator at the Aruba Bloodbank for no more than 36 hours while the patient receives chemotherapy. After chemotherapy, the patient's blood is returned to his body allowing the blood to produce new blood cells. According to the reports, the patient becomes very vulnerable during the first two weeks following the procedure because his resistance will be very low. For this reason, the patient is isolated to lessen the risk of getting an infection. The entire treatment takes about 3 to 4 weeks. Patients desiring to take this innovative treatment must be under 60 years of age and be free of active infections.

The benefit of this type of treatment compared to other types of stem cell transplants using a freezer is that this protocol uses less stem cells which includes less damaged stem cells. One serious consideration, however, is that the risk of infection remains very high.

The Dr. Horacio Oduber Hospital is extremely proud to offer this new treatment to our patients. This is definitely a major advancement in their quest to provide optimal, first class treatment and service to patients in Aruba.

They congratulate the first patient who had the confidence in our experts to undergo this treatment protocol. Special appreciation went to the Hospital Pharmacy, the Aruba Bloodbank Foundation, all the nurses, the Oncology Department and physicians who contributed to make this treatment possible.

Gates Foundation gives \$220 mln for TB research

(AFP) - Microsoft billionaire Bill Gates and his wife are to give \$220 million over five years to the non-profit biotech firm Aeras to develop vaccines to fight tuberculosis, a company statement said Thursday.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is donating the money to Aeras which from its bases in the United States and South Africa has developed six possible TB vaccines that are being tested across Africa, Asia, Europe and America.

"This infusion of funding must be seen as a global call to action in response to one of the world's deadliest diseases," said Jim Connolly, Aeras's president and chief executive, expressing gratitude for the massive grant.

"It will allow Aeras to expand upon existing partnerships in Europe, Africa, China, and around the world."

A total of 8.8 million people globally fell ill with the contagious lung disease in 2010 and around 1.4 million died, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

Trevor Mundel, president of the global health program at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, said the development of successful vaccines "would be the single greatest advance in the global fight against TB."

Once known as "consumption" for the slow wasting away of the people who died of it, one out of every three people is thought to be infected by the airborne TB organism, though only a fraction go on to develop the disease.

The WHO estimates the global economic burden of TB is \$12 billion a year, with India and China together accounting for more than half that cost.

Fitness tests for British police after half found overweight

LONDON (AFP) - British police officers should undertake an annual fitness test and face a pay cut if they repeatedly fail, a report said Thursday, after finding that half of London policemen were overweight.

"I think the public will be surprised that after passing a fitness test at the point of entry, except in special units like firearms, physical fitness is not tested again in a 30-, 35-year career," said report author Tom Winsor.

The senior lawyer was commissioned by the government in October 2010 to review police pay and conditions as part of ministers' efforts to slash spending through cuts and reform of public services.

He found 52 percent of male officers in London's

Scotland Yard police force are overweight, 22 percent are obese and one in ten are morbidly obese. For women, the figures were 32 percent, 16 percent and two percent respectively.

Winsor recommended that from September 2013, police officers be required to complete a test which would see them running the equivalent of 8.8 kilometres per hour (5.5 miles per hour) for three minutes and 35 seconds.

Those who fail the test three times should be subject to disciplinary procedures and a pay cut, the report said.

By 2018, the fitness test should become more difficult by adding activities which "police officers do and can be involved in", such as climbing over walls, it added.

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ELMAR

Dutch 'Repair Cafe' give trash a new lease of life



AMSTERDAM (AFP) - A broken-down vacuum cleaner, an old bicycle, a torn shirt ... almost nothing is impossible to fix for a group of crafty Dutch volunteers dedicated to giving potential trash a second lease of life.

The volunteers of Amsterdam's "Repair Cafe" are part of a network of 20 similar groups across The Netherlands who mend broken household appliances and electronics, rather than relegating them to the trash heap -- an all-too-easy choice in today's consumer society.

"People have simply lost the culture of repairs. We too easily throw away things that can be fixed," Martine Postma, the driving force behind the initiative, told AFP at Amsterdam's Repair Cafe.

Here in a rented hall, saws, screwdrivers and electric ca-

bles hang from the walls. Four electronics enthusiasts and two seamstresses are hard at work, fixing a sound system and mending torn clothing.

Postma, a former journalist, pulls a cell phone from her pocket which she bought a decade ago, saying: "It's missing three keys on the keypad but otherwise it works fine. Surely there must be a way to fix it."

Convinced that no one enjoys throwing things away, Postma, 41, opened the first Repair Cafe in Amsterdam in 2009 "to bring together two groups of people: 'repair volunteers' and those who want to fix things but don't know how."

Margreet Bakker, 57, brought in her vacuum cleaner, preferring the Repair Cafe to the manufacturer. "It's much better to bring it here,

rather than have it fixed by the manufacturer, who would charge the equivalent of a new vacuum cleaner," she said.

Bakker and Theo van den Akker, a tax consultant by profession, but also an electronics enthusiast, start probing the machine's innards.

They dismantle it, check its fan, test its electronics ... and within an hour later identify the problem. Simple, really: a loose connection at the plug. With that fixed, the vacuum cleaner hums back to life.

-- 'Devices today are not made to be fixed' --

Visitors to the Repair Cafe, working with "fixers," sometimes learn to do the repairs themselves.

"Devices made today are less and less reliable and they last far less time than they used to," lamented Van den Akker, 64, adding: "They are made less-and-less easy to take apart -- they are not made to be fixed."

What started as a purely local initiative in Amsterdam, the Repair Cafe became an overnight success, far exceeding Postma's expectations.

Funded by the Dutch state, the foundation advises volunteers on how to set up their own Repair Cafes.

Sci-Tech

New frog species discovered in New York City



NEW YORK (AFP) - Amazed biologists have uncovered a new species of frog in the jungle -- New York's concrete jungle.

The mottled green creature was for years mistaken as belonging to a widespread variety of the leopard frog. But now scientists realize this is new.

"For a new species to go unrecognized in this area is amazing," UCLA biologist Brad Shaffer said Wednesday.

New York is surrounded by wetlands and other nature-filled areas. But this latest urban creature appears to have chosen one of the grittiest corners as the center of its habitat: Yankee Stadium in the Bronx.

In the journal *Molecular Phylogenetics and Evolution*, Shaffer and other scientists compared the frog's DNA to that of other leopard frog species in the region. That's when they understood they were looking at a leopard frog, but a different kind.

"Many amphibians are secretive and very hard to find,

but these frogs are pretty obvious animals," said Shaffer.

"This shows that even in the largest city in the US, there are still new and important species waiting to be discovered."

Lead paper author Cathy Newman, now of Louisiana State University, was studying leopard frogs when her colleague Jeremy Feinberg at Rutgers University asked her to probe some "unusual frogs."

"There are northern and southern leopard frogs in that general area, so I was expecting to find one of those that for some reason had atypical behaviors or that were hybrids of both," Newman said.

"I was really surprised and excited once I started getting data back strongly suggesting it was a new species. It's fascinating in such a heavily urbanized area."

Feinberg said he'd been immediately curious.

This frog gave a repeated croak, not the "long snore" of other leopard frogs.

Human-like fossils in China caves puzzle scientists

WASHINGTON (AFP) - The most recent fossils ever found of a human-like species in southeast China have presented scientists with a mystery about what may be an unknown Stone Age culture, researchers said Wednesday.

Sometimes called the "red deer people," the remains are about 11,500 to 14,500 years old and appear to show a mix of modern and archaic peoples, said an Australian and Chinese team of researchers in the journal *PLoS One*.

The remains, including skulls and teeth, of at least three individuals were found in 1989 at Maludong, or Red

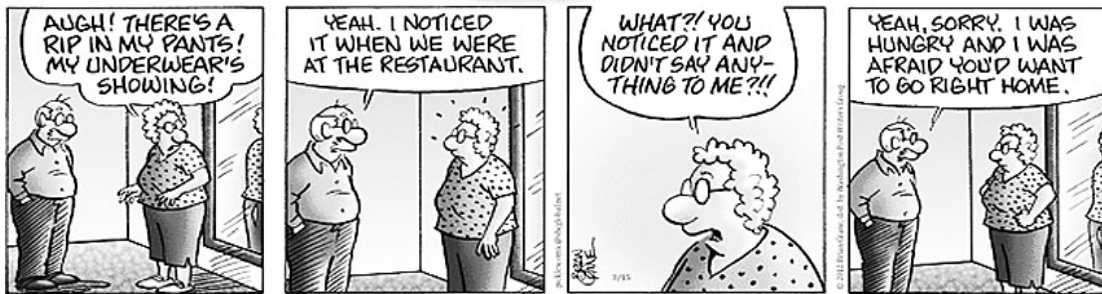
Deer Cave, in Yunnan Province, but the fossils went unstudied until 2008.

A fourth partial skeleton was found in 1979 in a cave in the village of Longlin, in the neighboring Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, but it remained encased in rock until it was eventually extracted in 2009.

"These new fossils might be of a previously unknown species, one that survived until the very end of the Ice Age around 11,000 years ago," said lead author Darren Curnoe, a professor at the University of New South Wales.

COMICS

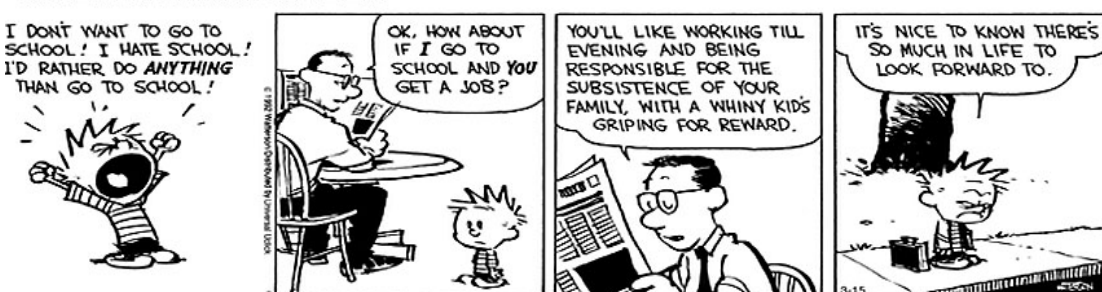
PICKLES



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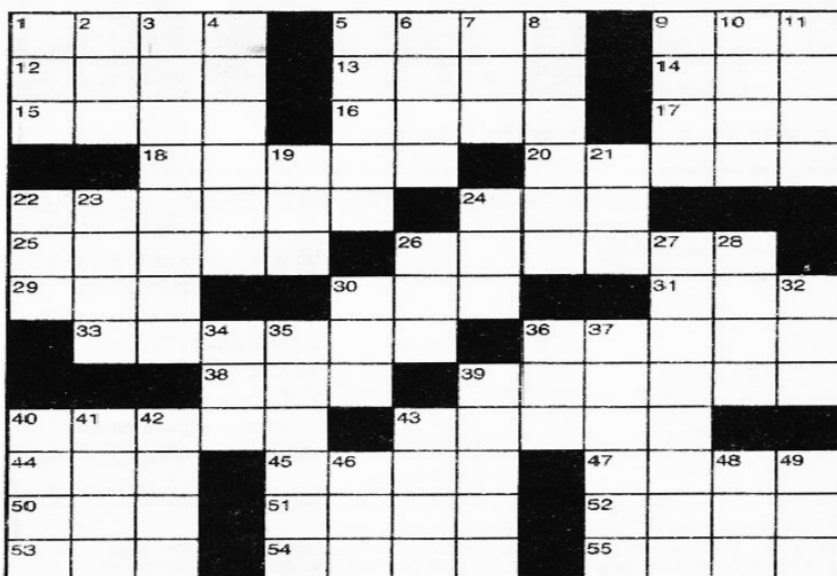
1. "The O.C." actor Brody
5. Wide reaching
9. Sandwich order
12. Starchy, edible root
13. Rick's love in "Casablanca"
14. College cheer
15. Prophecy
16. Fuel
17. Parisian pal
18. Ready to bunt (2 wds.)
20. Jackson and Hepburn
22. Bow and arrow user
24. Toned
25. Silly bird
26. Religious
29. "___ Yeller"
30. Dove's comment
31. Make do
33. Shelves
36. "It's ___ the Game" (2 wds.)
38. Snaky swimmer
39. Burning
40. Synagogue leader
43. Type of grease
44. Tycoon
45. Fish market purchase
47. Thanksgiving

50. Blasting letters
51. Contain
52. Coffee-making method
53. Wide shoe width
54. Prayer's end
55. Singe

DOWN

1. From ___ Z (2 wds.)
2. Grand Coulee, e.g.
3. Long-distance prefix (2 wds.)

4. Year units
5. Church official
6. Many (2 wds.)
7. Retirement benefit agency
8. "The Jazz Singer," for one
9. Unruly child
10. Hobbled
11. ___ or that
19. Hive dweller
21. Had lunch
22. Time past
23. Throw the dice
24. To's pal
26. Businesses (abbr.)
27. The First State
28. Read quickly
30. Animation collectible
32. Wind dir.
34. Society gal
35. Tokyo entertainer
36. Andrews, for one (abbr.)
37. ___ of London
39. Standish's stand-in
40. Assess
41. "Rule Britannia" composer
42. Quick lunch
43. Roof part
46. Lunch meat
48. Actress Farrow
49. Apr.'s season



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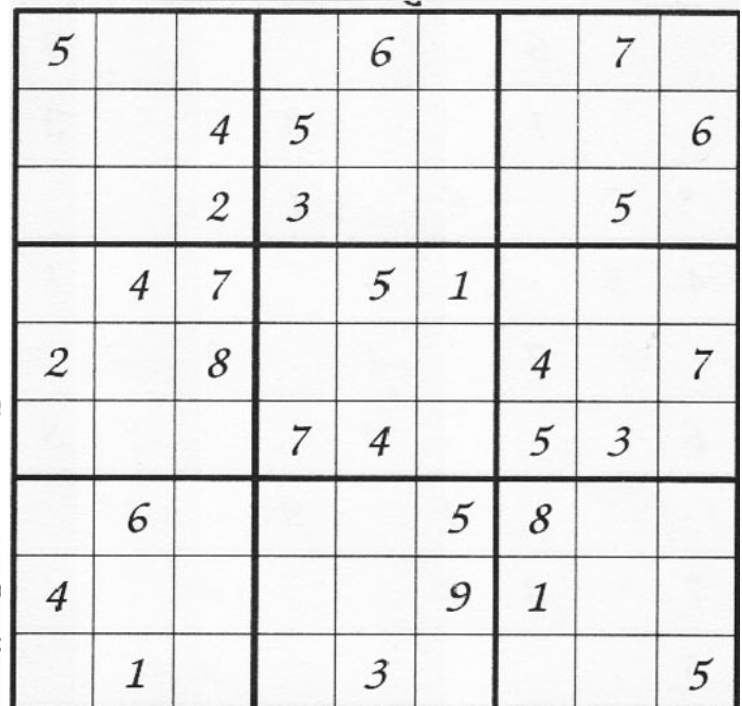
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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | 2 | 1 | 9 | 4 | 6 | 1 | 8 | 3 |
| 8 | 9 | 1 | 6 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 7 | 4 |
| 6 | 4 | 8 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 9 | 7 | 3 |
| 2 | 5 | 8 | 4 | 7 | 9 | 6 | 1 | 3 |
| 7 | 1 | 4 | 6 | 9 | 8 | 5 | 2 | 3 |
| 8 | 6 | 9 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 7 | 4 | 3 |
| 1 | 5 | 6 | 4 | 8 | 7 | 2 | 9 | 3 |
| 9 | 8 | 2 | 7 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 6 | 3 |
| 4 | 7 | 3 | 9 | 6 | 1 | 8 | 5 | 2 |

Complete the grid so that every row and every column contains the numbers 1 through 9
A number is Never repeated in a row or column.
In addition every rectangle must contain the numbers 1 through 9

Finance

SWIFT to cut services for Iran firms blacklisted by EU

BRUSSELS (AFP) - European Union nations agreed yesterday to ban financial transfers such as SWIFT payments to hundreds of Iranian firms and individuals blacklisted by the bloc over Tehran's contested nuclear drive.

In several rounds of sanctions, the latest in January, the EU froze assets of 116 people and 442 firms and utilities, including the Iranian central bank.

The measures are part of global efforts to force Tehran to abandon a nuclear program feared to have military aims -- a claim rejected by Tehran.

A statement yesterday said the EU had "agreed that no specialised financial messaging shall be provided to those persons and entities subject to an asset freeze."

An EU official who asked not to be identified said the de-

cision, which was adopted after written approval from the 27 nations, would mainly affect payments through SWIFT, the world's biggest inter-bank transfer network.

In a statement, Belgium-based SWIFT confirmed it had been instructed to discontinue communications services to Iranian financial institutions which are subject to European sanctions.

"Disconnecting banks is an extraordinary and unprecedented step for SWIFT. It is a direct result of international and multilateral action to intensify financial sanctions against Iran," said its CEO, Lazaro Campos.

The cut in services will take effect Saturday, March 17 at 1600 GMT, the company said.

SWIFT is a member-owned cooperative that enables over 10,000 financial institutions

and corporations in 210 countries to connect.

The United States, with along with the EU has been at the forefront of tightening sanctions on Tehran, welcomed the measure.

US Treasury Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence David S. Cohen said "today's action reinforces the isolation of designated Iranian banks from the international financial sector."

The EU official meanwhile said talks were continuing to draft a regulation setting out details on an decision in February to slap an embargo on Iranian oil.

"It will take a few more weeks" to finalise the regulation, the source said.

After lengthy and fraught talks, EU ministers in February agreed a ban on oil imports with a gradual phase-out of existing contracts between now and July 1.

Earlier this month, global powers offered to resume long-stalled nuclear talks with Tehran amid mounting tension between Israel and Iran.

Apple shares top \$600 ahead of iPad launch

NEW YORK (AFP) - Apple shares briefly soared past \$600 for the first time on Wall Street yesterday, a day ahead of the launch of the next-generation iPad.

Shares of the Cupertino, California-based gadget-maker hit \$600.01 shortly after the ringing of the opening bell at 9:30 am. An hour later, they were trading at \$590.12, up 0.09 percent over Wednesday's close.

Apple shares have gained 57 percent in the past three months and 73 percent over the past year. They were trading at \$252.35 on March 16, 2011.

Some analysts are forecasting they will go even higher. Morgan Stanley pinned a \$720 price target on Apple shares while Canaccord Equity aimed at \$710.

Apple's new iPad goes on sale today in the United States and nine other countries including Australia and France. A week later the new iPads will be available in nearly 30 more countries.



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IMF approves 28 bn euro loan for Greece

WASHINGTON (AFP) - The International Monetary Fund approved a new 28 billion euro (\$36.7 billion) loan for Greece yesterday, as part of the European Union's huge new bailout plan for the debt-riddled country.

The IMF said the approval of the four-year loan program allowed the immediate disbursement of 1.65 billion euros to Athens.

Despite some misgivings among members over the Fund pouring more money into troubled Greece and Europe, and worries that Greece's fractious politics might impede progress in restructuring its finances, approval by the IMF executive board had been expected.

After keeping its plans secret for weeks until the EU and Athens could complete a mas-

sive 107 billion euro private sector debt writeoff, last Friday IMF chief Christine Lagarde announced the larger-than-expected 28 billion euro proposal.

The type of loan, an extended fund facility (EFF), is used to support member countries suffering long-standing structural problems.

On Wednesday, the IMF said it would officially extend the EFF maximum timetable from three years to four years.

The IMF was disappointed by Greece's progress under its previous 30 billion euro loan, part of a huge IMF-EU bailout that failed to get Athens's finances on a sustainable path.

The IMF disbursed 20.3 billion euros of that loan. The rest has been cancelled to make way for the new loan program.

"Recycled" diamonds come back to haunt industry

Sabrina Thompson, a 30-something restaurant manager from Toronto, says she turned to Craigslist to sell her diamond engagement ring after her relationship ended. She says the cash will help her move on with her life.

Experts say a growing cadre of people, especially in North America, are thinking along the same lines. Rather than hanging on to memories of a failed relationship or departed relative, they are opting

to "recycle" their diamonds.

It's a trend that is sending ripples through the gem industry at a time when high-quality rough diamonds have become more difficult to find, and more expensive to mine.

The growing influx of "used" gems means prices could stagnate over the long term despite the supply restraints, Even-Zohar said during a presentation at a huge mining industry convention held last week in Toronto.



REPUBLIC OF KOREA, SEOUL: AFP photo shows South Korean conservative activists rolling a large balloon showing the US flags over their heads during a rally to support South Korea-US free trade agreement in Seoul yesterday. A long-delayed free trade agreement between the United States and South Korea took effect amid praises from their leaders but also sparking scattered protests. A Korean banner reads "Let's occupy the world market and become an economic power."

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|----------------------|---------------|-----------------------|----------------|--------------|
| Current as of: | Currency Code | Buying rate banknotes | Buying Cheques | Selling Rate |
| 03/15/2012 | | | | |
| U.S.A. | USD | 1.77 | 1.78 | 1.80 |
| Dutch Antilles | ANG | 98.00 | 100.00 | 100.20 |
| Canada | CAD | 1.77 | 1.79 | 1.81 |
| Britain | GBP | 2.72 | 2.77 | 2.83 |
| Switzerland | CHF | 192.10 | 192.82 | 193.62 |
| Netherlands | EUR | 230.45 | 232.55 | 234.89 |
| Sweden | SEK | 25.09 | 25.81 | 26.61 |
| Denmark | DKK | 30.32 | 31.04 | 31.84 |
| Norway | NOK | 29.77 | 30.49 | 31.29 |
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Croatian Catholic Church says 'no' to Serbian gay movie

ZAGREB (AFP) - A Croatian bishop banned the showing of a Serbian comedy about gays which was to be shown in a temporary cinema owned by the diocese in Dubrovnik, Catholic authorities said Thursday.

"The Parade", an unlikely hit in the homophobic Balkans, tells of a gay couple trying to organise a pride parade in Belgrade, was also banned because of its treatment of the 1991-95 Yugoslav wars, the diocese said.

Bishop Mate Uzinic ruled that the movie cannot be shown because of its theme "which is against Church's position regarding homosexuality."

He added that the movie also treats all sides in the Balkan conflict on an equal footing, whereas "Dubrovnik suffered a lot" as it was besieged and shelled by Belgrade-controlled Yugoslav forces.

"The Parade" topped the box office in Serbia in 2011, drawing an audience of 300,000. Another 200,000 people have watched it in Bosnia, Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia and Montenegro.

In the film the gays enlist a shady war veteran to protect their parade.

He in turn calls on his former buddies and adversaries from the Yugoslav wars to help him: a Croatian, a Bosnian Muslim and a Kosovo Albanian.

Dubrovnik mayor Andro Vlahusic said the movie will be shown once the Adriatic resort's usual cinema, which is being renovated, reopens in about three weeks.

The Catholic Church plays an important role in Croatia where almost 90 percent of the population of 4.2 million is Roman Catholic.



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Depardieu to play 'smug' DSK because he doesn't like him

PARIS (AFP) - French actor Gerard Depardieu said on Thursday he would play the "arrogant, smug" former IMF chief Dominique Strauss-Kahn in a film about his fall from grace in a series of sex scandals.

"I will do it, because I don't like him," said Depardieu, best known for his larger-than-life swashbuckling roles like warrior poet Cyrano de Bergerac or comic book hero Asterix's huge sidekick Obelix.

"He's not lovable. I think he's a bit like all the French, a bit arrogant. I don't much like the French in any case," he told Swiss television. "He's very French: arrogant, smug. He's playable."

Strauss-Kahn had been the favourite to win next month's French presidential election until May last year, when the former Socialist minister was arrested in New York and accused of sexually assaulting a hotel maid.

The US case fell apart over doubts about the alleged victim's testimony, but since his return to France he has been implicated in a series of further scandals and is under investigation for alleged ties to a vice ring.

Asked about the "impulses" that drive Strauss-Kahn's behaviour, Depardieu said it was not these that disgusted him, but his general attitude.

"It's the way he walks, with one hand in his pocket. We can all have filthy thoughts, and it's well known

that these guys with huge power, money, the IMF or top judicial officials can be like that," he said.

Depardieu said he would not try to inhabit the role of Strauss-Kahn too deeply, as he had "never been much moved by people who have no dignity."

In August last year Depardieu gave his own dignity a knock when he urinated in the aisle of a passenger plane after a stewardess had refused to allow him to go to the toilet, but he remains one of France's best-loved stars.

He is a strong supporter of right-wing President Nicolas Sarkozy, who is standing for re-election next month and would probably have faced a tough challenge from 62-year-old Strauss-Kahn if the Socialist had not been arrested.

Depardieu appeared at a Sarkozy election rally on Sunday and told reporters that the president "only does good".

US director Abel Ferrara has announced that he plans to film a Strauss-Kahn movie in the next few months, featuring Depardieu as the fallen IMF boss and Isabelle Adjani as his loyal wife Anne Sinclair.

Strauss-Kahn is due to appear before magistrates in the northern French city of Lille later this month and is expected to be charged with offences linked to his alleged involvement in a vice ring that procured escorts for orgies.

Dustin Hoffman TV show canceled over horse deaths



LOS ANGELES (AFP) - A hit US television series starring Dustin Hoffman has been canceled after three horses died during filming, the channel which makes the show announced Wednesday.

"Luck," about thoroughbred racing and also starring Nick Nolte, launched in January and had already been picked up for a second season, with production mostly at a horsetrack east of Los Angeles.

But a first horse died on the set in 2010 and another died last year. Then a third animal had to be put down on Tuesday after falling backwards and striking its head, despite new safety rules put in place.

"Safety is always of paramount concern," said Home Box Office, which aired the show.

"We maintained the highest safety standards .. higher in fact than any protocols existing in horse racing anywhere with many fewer incidents than occur in racing or than befall horses normally in barns at night or pastures.

"While we maintained the highest safety standards possi-

ble, accidents unfortunately happen and it is impossible to guarantee they won't in the future. Accordingly, we have reached this difficult decision," it said.

Executive producers David Milch and Michael Mann added: "The two of us loved this series, loved the cast, crew and writers. This has been a tremendous collaboration and one that we plan to continue in the future."

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Adorable and affordable; 5 Burgers Aruba offers an island twist to the great American Burger

Expatriates residing on Aruba, Aaron and Rosie Walisever are living their dream: a home on paradise while welcoming all and sundry to their proud undertaking, 5 Burgers Aruba. Some may be quite well acquainted with a nationally known U.S franchise bearing the name "5", and patrons can expect the same great quality between the buns, but an expanded menu and Rosie and Aaron's fanatical dedication to giving their customers what they really want has resulted in a unique menu.

"You never get a second chance to make a



Rosie and Aaron love their Burger too



Gouda Burger 2

first impression," comments Aaron; and upon entering 5 Burgers Aruba in The Village Mall in Palm Beach, one is struck by utterly spotless surroundings and a smiling, friendly, attentive service crew. Of course, the main item on the menu is burgers—the way they were meant to be, thick and juicy, made fresh daily and 100% pure beef, the kind that made the hamburger a traditional American treat.

Prices vary only slightly between regular and small (basically 2 patties or 1) with specialty items such as Gouda Burger, Farmer's Burger, Man Burger (almost 12 ounces of choice beef), and a Western Burger with crispy onion rings and BBQ sauce. All of these can be personalized with an incredible array of toppings, (mushrooms, jalapeño peppers, bacon, cheese, lettuce, tomato... whatever the list goes on) at absolutely no extra cost.

5 Burger portions are ENORMOUS! Aaron suggests that even their small serving of fries, which are made from hand-cut fresh Idaho potatoes, is enough to

be shared by two. He was very amused to watch a famous French chef demonstrating the best way to make fried potatoes on a gourmet cooking show and could only comment "He stole my recipe!" Try them the English way—with vinegar, and you'll wonder how you ever ate fries without it. This same 5-star chef also swears by Gouda as the best topping for the ideal gourmet cheeseburger.

If you are a fan of crispy friend onion rings, as we are at THE MORNING NEWS, you cannot leave there without trying their secret recipe batter-dipped gourmet rings, made from fresh, not frozen onions. Unquestionably, the best we have had anywhere, and for those that like a little spice, the fried jalapeños are a real treat. Aaron and Rosie have expanded their menu to accommodate certain tastes and dietary needs; they offer a tasty grilled chicken sandwich as well.

5 Burgers Aruba is open for lunch & dinner — daily hours are Noon to 10-ish; delivery is available to both the high-rise and low-rise hotel and beach district for orders over \$50. Enjoy a great lunch without ever leaving the beach by calling 586-3904. However, we suggest you stop by and enjoy their authentic, heartfelt hospitality; it is not unusual for the owners when things are not too busy, to sit and chat while sharing their knowledge of the island. Totally yummy and fun plus a great deal for a quality burger, they are definitely worth a visit

Gold Coast Aruba: Great savings for large families on holiday rentals



Aruba's newest and most innovative gated community has enjoyed steady sales since breaking ground, as many are finding the secure surroundings and outstanding amenities are just what they were looking for before considering purchasing property on the island. Some owners are using the villas or town homes as vacation retreats rather than full time and are taking advantage of Gold Coast's rental services to turn their investment into ready income.

"The greater portion of home owners are using their 'home away from home' in Aruba to escape the winter months, or spend holidays with the family on the island," noted Gold Coast developer Fito Croes. To assist in the demand for more complete facilities for groups and families, famed hotelier Ed Malone has been placed in charge of the rental program.

Staying at Gold Coast is a very attractive proposition for those traveling with groups that would require multiple hotel rooms. Two and three bedroom Villas or Town Homes accommodate large numbers and offer extensive amenities along with a final cost resulting in considerable savings. The community is minutes to the best beaches and all the casino action, and offers a quiet and secluded getaway with two swimming pools and specialized services with more on the way, such as a fitness room, tennis courts and mini-mall. Ed can arrange maid service, babysitters, caterers, airline pick-up

and drop-off; they even boast a shopping service to stock your shelves before arrival.

Gold Coast accommodations are elegant and spacious, offering privacy for parents or a few couples.

high-speed fiber-optic Internet connection, individual washer/dryer, and are fully air-conditioned. Cribs, high chairs and hair dryers are available for a modest fee. Concierge services to arrange



Beautifully appointed kitchens and bathrooms grace each abode; barbecues and lounges are provided for friendly cookouts and truly savoring the island life. All homes come with cable TV,

rental cars, spa appointments, activities and restaurant reservations are all part of the package.

Check-in for your holiday escape is conducted in the comfort of your vacation home, not while waiting on line at check-in desk. In every way, Gold Coast seeks to pamper their guests while providing them with the feeling of being in a cozy community, not the normally bustling resort, particularly experienced during the major holidays. If you wish an optimal vacation experience with great savings, visit their website: www.goldcoastaruba.com to get acquainted with the community and the layout, details and availability of accommodations, or call 586-2200 to talk personally to a Gold Coast representative.



SPORTS

Street football World Championship to be played on Aruba

Last December, Dutch football great, known internationally for his tremendous skills on the football field, Edgar Davids, visited Aruba. Davids was here as keynote speaker for the Happy Community Conference organized by the government of Aruba. In his speech Davids mentioned the tremendous work being done through the "Straat Voetbalbond Nederland" (SVBN) of which he is a member. SVBN together with Humberto Tan and other athletes, musicians and dancers in Holland are organizing football tournaments in the streets and barrios where young people live who need positive attention. According to Davids, these tournaments in the barrios have a marked positive influence on the barrios. In these barrios, people seem to lay aside their differences and young people get an opportunity to demonstrate their talents to the entire world. The government succeeded in getting Edgar Davids to agree to have the World Street Football Championship



Aruba Prime Minister, Eman with Dutch footballer Davids

onship here in Aruba. According to the Prime Minister, throughout the entire year they will be organizing street football tournaments in preparation for the world championship. Edgar Davids pledged his support for organizing this and to be present for the occasion.

In the meantime, work is being carried out on the field where the games will be played. Some 16 countries have indicated their participa-

tion in this world street football championship. This is the very first time such an event will be held here on Aruba. The games are scheduled for November 30th and December 1st and 2nd. This championship will be in cooperation with SVNB and Aruba.

The countries that have already registered are, Brazil, Holland, France, Spain, England, Italy, South Africa, Germany and the USA.

27th Aruba International Half Marathon to be filmed by Venevision

This weekend the 27th Aruba International Half Marathon will take place on our island. This is the biggest race on Aruba with the participation of athletes from various countries, among others, the USA, Holland, Curacao and Venezuela.

This year the Aruba Tourism office in Caracas has begun promoting the "Turismo Deportivo" and has received a lot of reaction. As a result, the filming team

of the Venevision Television channel in Caracas is coming to Aruba this weekend specifically to film this great event.

Together with our local media, the Venevision crew will be stationed at the Alhambra Casino Food Court on Friday, March 16th from 7:00pm to 9:00pm for the Pre-Race Social Event. Then, on Sunday morning the 18th they will cover the 27th Aruba International Half

Marathon.

IDEFRE is extremely pleased with the international television coverage of Aruba's International Half Marathon this year. They are inviting all our athletes to participate in this great event. All athletes are encouraged to be present on Friday the 16th at the information night where they will describe the route, the rules of the Marathon, check in details, and other important information.

IDEFRE wishes all our athletes who will be participating in this year's Aruba International Half Marathon, great success. The race is scheduled to begin at 5:30 am on Sunday, March 18th from the Joe Laveist Sport Park in San Nicolaas and will end at the parking lot of the Alhambra Casino.

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NFL: Top defensive free agent signs

NEW YORK (AFP) - Mario Williams, considered the top NFL defensive free agent player available, signed a six-year contract with the Buffalo Bills on Thursday worth a reported \$100 million dollars.

Half of the money in the deal for the two-time All-Pro defensive end is guaranteed, the largest assured sum for any defensive player in league history.

Williams, the top overall selection in the 2006 NFL Draft, made 53 sacks in 82 games over six seasons with the Houston Texans, including a club record 14 sacks in the 2007 season.

A torn chest muscle kept

Williams to only five games last season, but he will be looked upon to revive a Bills defensive unit that was third-worst in the league in points allowed and seventh-worst in total yardage allowed.

Williams brings new hope that the Bills, the only team to lose four Super Bowls in a row, might find their way back into the playoffs after missing out for 12 years in a row, the longest active playoff appearance drought in the NFL.

The signing gives the Bills, who went 6-10 last season, a chance to rise from the bottom of the AFC East division after years of domination by the New England Patriots and the New York Jets.

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NBA: Knicks respond to D'Antoni departure with win



Jeremy Lin #17 of the New York Knicks drives against (R) Chris Johnson #17 of the Portland Trail Blazers.

NEW YORK (AFP) - The New York Knicks responded to the turmoil of coach Mike D'Antoni's resignation on Wednesday with a resounding 121-79 victory over Portland that ended a six-game NBA skid.

D'Antoni departed Wednesday morning, under fire as defeats piled up and star player Carmelo Anthony failed to mesh with headline-grabbing newcomer point guard Jeremy Lin.

With newly named interim coach Mike Woodson on the

bench for his first game since he was promoted from assistant status for the remainder of the season, the Knicks routed the Trail Blazers.

J.R. Smith led the Knicks with 23 points off the bench - including seven three-pointers. Steve Novak added 20 and Amare Stoudemire chipped in 17 with eight rebounds.

Anthony had 16 points and seven assists, while Lin -- who became a global sensation with his unlikely rise from bench-warmer to starting point guard -- scored six points with six assists and six turnovers.

The Knicks had gone 6-1 with Anthony sidelined and Lin leading the way. With Wednesday's victory, they are 3-8 with Anthony back.

He admitted he was frustrated by being blamed for the Knicks' recent woes.

"It gets frustrating at times to hear some of the stuff being said about me," Anthony said. "At the end of the day what can I do about it? It's a basketball game."

Lin, waived by two teams before he was picked up by the Knicks, admitted he found the sudden departure of the coach who gave him his big NBA break "emotional".

"I was surprised," Lin said. "I know some people were talking about it and what-not, but I didn't know the reality of it."

Despite the upheaval, Woodson said the Knicks' goal remains the same -- a playoff campaign.

"Expectations are high. That's how it should be. I ex-

pressed that to the guys. We still have a great opportunity to do something special in New York ... I'm going to hold these guys accountable for that, being the coach," said Woodson, who was warmly welcomed by the Madison Square Garden crowd.

Meanwhile in Chicago, The Chicago Bulls beat a determined Miami Heat 106-102 on Wednesday without the help of the NBA's Most Valuable Player Derrick Rose, stretching their Eastern Conference lead.

"This was a big game. I'm not going to lie," said Chicago's British forward Luol Deng, who returned from a two-games on the sidelines after injuring a wrist.

"Whatever it takes to win, that's what we do," Deng said. "And we've been doing that all year."

With Rose sidelined, John Lucas personified their dogged spirit, scoring a team-high 24 points off the bench that included a career best three three-pointers.

Lucas's performance also included an impressive jump shot over LeBron James with just over four minutes remaining.

His form helped Chicago survive an onslaught by the Heat with 35 points to James and 36 from Dwayne Wade. The rest of the Heat contributed just 28 points, with Chris Bosh scoring 12 on 3-of-15 shooting.

Miami, who at one point trailed by 17 points, cut the deficit to two with six seconds remaining thanks to two three-pointers by James Jones.

But the Bulls' Kyle Korver and Lucas combined to make six of six from the free-throw line to seal the victory in the final 30 seconds.

Chicago improved to a league-leading 36-9, while the Heat fell to 31-11.

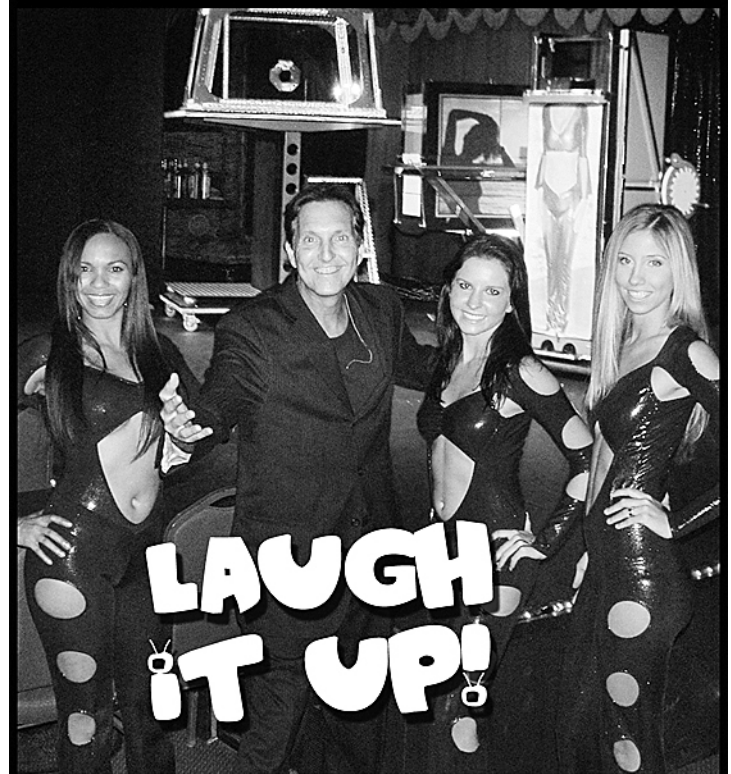
Bulls coach Tom Thibodeau, however, was quick to recall that even though his side swept the regular-season series against the Heat last season, it was Miami who triumphed in the Eastern Conference finals series between the two.

"We're chasing them," Thibodeau said. "They're the Eastern Conference champions."

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GROUP SALES: (297) 561-1090

WestinAruba.com/magic

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Djokovic reaches Indian Wells semi-finals

INDIAN WELLS (AFP) - Top seed and defending champion Novak Djokovic advanced to the semi-finals of the Indian Wells Masters Thursday, easing past 12th seeded Nicolas Almagro 6-3, 6-4.

World number one Djokovic has now beaten Almagro in all three career meetings and he reached the Indian Wells final four for the third time in as many years.

Djokovic next faces either France's Gilles Simon or John Isner of the United States.

The Serbian hammered five aces and won 77 percent of his first serve points in the 82

minute match Thursday.

Djokovic broke Almagro two times in taking the first set in 30 minutes. He had a tougher time in the second set as Almagro started to connect with his first serve.

Tied 3-3 in the second set and serving in the seventh game, Almagro hit a backhand winner to reach game point. He then closed the game out with an ace to take a 4-3 lead.

But Djokovic won the next three games, breaking Almagro's serve in the ninth game of the second and then served for the victory. He clinched the match on his first match point with a backhand winner.

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One Day Seminar in the Works for Aruban Athletes

On Saturday an interesting seminar will be held in the ATIA building for all athletes here. This seminar is being offered by the Commission of Athletes of the International Olympic Committee. The primary purpose of this seminar is to help in the development of the career of our athletes and to contribute to their personal professionalism as athletes.

Mr. Pedro Yang and Patrick Glennon will be in Aruba at the end of the week to offer the seminar to our athletes. Both gentlemen are experts of the "Athletic Career Program." The seminar

will address various topics, such as introduction and historical structure of the International Olympic Committee, what is the meaning of dreaming and working hard to realize dreams, how to develop a plan for an athletic career, how to "network" to achieve a successful professional career, how to speak in public, and several other important topics.

The seminar is scheduled to take place on March 17th from 8:00am through to 4:00pm in the afternoon at the ATIA building in Oranjestad.

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Tennis: Ivanovic gets her revenge at Indian Wells



INDIAN WELLS (AFP) - Former champion Ana Ivanovic advanced to the Indian Wells semi-finals on Thursday, easing past a stricken Marion Bartoli 6-3, 6-4 in a rematch of their quarter-final contest from last year.

"I am definitely happy to be through and get my revenge from last year in the quarters," Ivanovic said. "It was a tough match. I served well."

"We both started well but that eighth game of the second set was important. I just tried to stay low and make her run."

France's Bartoli reached the semi-finals in Indian Wells last year with a close 6-4, 7-6 (7/4) win over the 24-year-old Serbian. Bartoli went on to the final where she lost to Caroline Wozniacki.

Ivanovic advances to the semis where she will face either Maria Sharapova or Maria Kirilenko.

Bartoli was trailing 1-2 in the second set when she asked for the doctor to come out onto the court. As the doctor was taking her blood pressure, the

television cameras caught her saying, "everything is spinning."

She was in discomfort for the remainder of the match, bending over and grabbing her stomach between serves.

The opening set started off with consecutive service breaks before Ivanovic held serve in game three.

Ivanovic broke Bartoli in the eighth game of the opening set and then served for the set, finishing it off with an ace on the final point.

In the first game of the second set, Bartoli double faulted on game point to allow Ivanovic to go ahead 1-0.

Ivanovic has now made it to at least the Indian Wells quarter-finals on five occasions, winning title four years ago.

Bartoli's exit means that both last year's winner Wozniacki and runner-up are out of the women's draw.